

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. An apparatus for treating a region of patient tissue, wherein the tissue has a surface, the apparatus comprising:

an accessing tool for accessing the region, the accessing tool having a distal end and a proximal end and being manipulable from the proximal end to place the distal end in contact with the region;

a shaft disposed proximate the distal end of the accessing tool;

a cap member coupled to the shaft and disposed at the distal end of the accessing tool;

a support member having an opening therein for receiving the shaft therethrough, the shaft extending through the opening, and the support member being capable of being positioned near or in contact with a proximal-facing side of the cap member; and

one or more pressure transducer elements coupled to the support member or to the cap member at one or more locations surrounding the shaft;

wherein, during operation of the accessing tool, at least one of the one or more pressure transducer elements, in response to a force applied to the cap member by the region, generates one or more information signals.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the one or more information signals are indicative of the magnitude of the force applied to the cap member.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein a plurality of pressure transducer elements are coupled to the support member or the cap member and at least partially surround the shaft.